



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
Western District of Texas

JOHNNY SUTTON
United States Attorney

601 NW Loop 410 STE 600
San Antonio, Texas 78216

(210)384-7400
FAX: (210)384-7474

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 17, 2002

On the Web at: WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/TXW/INDEX.HTML

Contact: Public Affairs Officer Daryl Fields
San Antonio (210) 384-7440
AUSA Brandy Gardes
(915) 534-6884

GASANOVs SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR ALIEN SMUGGLING FOR PROFIT

(EL PASO, TEXAS) This morning, U.S. District Judge David Briones sentenced a Russian couple to five years in federal prison for their roles in an alien smuggling for profit scheme which incorporated the common practice of confiscating and withholding travel and identification documents to coerce labor and services.

In addition to the 5-year-prison term, **SARDAR GASANOV**, a 41-year-old Research Assistant in the Biological Science Department of the University of Texas at El Paso and his wife, 38-year-old **NADIRA GASANOV** were ordered to pay \$516,152.62 in restitution to their victims and forfeit roughly \$650,000 in assets.

On March 15, 2002, a federal jury convicted the Gasanovs of conspiracy, alien smuggling conspiracy, and three substantive alien smuggling counts.

The Gasanovs recruited women from their hometown—Tashkent, Uzbekistan—to come to the United States promising them prosperous modeling jobs, extravagant lifestyles, and the ability to bring their family members to the United States. They used fraudulently obtained J-1 visas to bring Russian women into the United States through El Paso. The visas purportedly showed that the Russian women were scientists traveling to the United States for research at the University of Texas at El Paso. Once in El Paso, the Gasanovs confiscated their immigration documents, then required them to work seven days a week at strip clubs in El Paso for the benefit of the Gasanovs. The defendants used the confiscation of documents, the threat of deportation, and threats against the victims' families to induce the Russian women to remain in the service of the Gasanovs, be productive dancers, and to give all of their earnings to the Gasanovs. Authorities estimate the Gasanovs collected over \$700,000 as a result of their criminal enterprise.

— more —

This case is the result of an investigation by special agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Immigration and Naturalization Service, the U.S. State Department and the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission. This investigation is part of an Initiative by Attorney General John Ashcroft to crack down on human trafficking and modern-day slavery. In October 2000, Congress passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, which provided Federal law enforcement with new tools to prosecute the sophisticated forms of coercion that traffickers use to exploit their victims. The VTVPA criminalized the common practice of confiscation and withholding of travel and identification documents to coerce labor and services. The VTVPA also requires traffickers to pay restitution to victims and forfeit their assets upon conviction. This indictment marks the first use of the document confiscation and forfeiture provision in the new Act.

To report a case of forced labor, contact the National Human Trafficking and Worker Exploitation Task Force at 1-888-428-7581. For more information, including a link to the VTVPA, log on to Task Force's website at "www.usdoj.gov/crt/crim/wetf.htm"

#####